

BRICK MAKING

In the early years of Midway there were two yards for manufacturing brick. One yard and kiln was located northwest of the city and was operated by John Van Wagoner. The other location was on the southwest side of the city, just east of the cemetery. This was operated by Henry Van Wagoner and David Provost. The first brick in the valley was made by John Watkins. Another early brick-maker was William Van Wagoner.

Brick-making flourished in Midway because there were several large hills of clay available in the area.

Production techniques, though somewhat crude, produced good brick. The usual procedure began by digging a hole the size of a very

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large room and filling this hole with water and clay. This mixture was allowed to soak overnight. Next morning, the mixture was transferred to a large wooden box which contained an apparatus referred to as a "dolly." The dolly actually was large mixing blades. The mixing device was powered by horses that plodded around the large box in a manner similar to old-time threshing of grain.

As the mud was being mixed, workmen would prepare wooden molds that were dipped in water and then in red sand. When the mud mixture was at the right consistency, it was taken from the mixing box, put into the wooden molds and leveled. These raw brick were then stacked with air space between each brick. Among the piles of brick, fire boxes or trenches were built, running about two feet apart. Fires were built in these trenches and kept burning continuously for three days and nights, or until the bricks were dry.

Indicative of the hard work involved in making brick is this note from the books of Henry Van Wagoner. Mr. Van Wagoner kept the time of his employees in a note book, and wrote after the name of one man: "One very, very hard days work for Henry Van Wagoner for only two dollars."

The Midway brick yards operated for many years, furnishing materials for such buildings as Wasatch High School which was built in 1912; homes such as the Nelson's by the railroad tracks, Bonner's, James Ritchie's in Charleston, Streets, George Johnson's and Coleman's. The Henry T. Coleman home built by John Watkins is said to be the first brick house built in the valley.

Some of the more prominent brick makers through the years have been David Provost, Theophilus Epperson, Amos and Lawrence Epperson, Louis Coleman and E. Luke Provost.